

REMARKS

Thorough examination and careful review of the application by the Examiner is noted and appreciated.

The indication by the Examiner that claims 3 and 8 are objected to, but would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the objections set forth in this Office Action and to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, is further noted and appreciated.

Independent claim 24 has been added which is equivalent to claim 3 being rewritten into independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim 1. Independent claim 31 has been added which is equivalent to claim 8 being rewritten into independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim 1. The Applicants therefore respectfully submit that, as indicated by the Examiner, the newly added claims 24 and 31 are now allowable. Favorable consideration for allowance is respectfully requested of the Examiner.

New dependent claims 25-30 and 32-38 have been added which are equivalent to the existing claims 4-9. The Applicants further submit that these newly added dependent claims are also

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allowable. A consideration for allowance of these claims is respectfully requested of the Examiner.

Claims 1-9 are pending in the application. Claims 1-2, 4-7 and 9 stand rejected.

Claim Rejections Under 35 USC §102

Claims 1-2, 4-7 and 9 are rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Higashikawa et al '637. It is contended that Higashikawa et al discloses a lithographic semiconductor fabrication process including the steps of exposing a semiconductor wafer to a first mask part that is at least defective, exposing the semiconductor wafer to a second mask part corresponding to the first mask part, and that is at least free from defects a second and a third time.

The rejection of claims 1-2, 4-7 and 9 under 35 USC §102(b) based on Higashikawa et al is respectfully traversed.

The Applicants respectfully submit that, contrary to the Examiner's contention that Higashikawa et al discloses a method including the step of exposing a wafer to a first mask part that is at least defective, the Applicants respectfully submit that as

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described in the summary of the invention at col. 2, lines 10-19, Higashikawa et al states:

"Selectively forming an opaque film on defective portions including defects of a main pattern region of an original mask on which an LSI pattern is formed, **to prevent the defective portions from being transferred;** transferring the main pattern region of the original mask to a substrate to be exposed; and transferring at least one spare pattern to a portion of the substrate corresponding to each of the defective portions of the original mask."

Higashikawa et al therefore teaches a method in which defects on a mask is first repaired by depositing a carbon film on the defect (see Fig. 2B, col. 7, lines 7-12), and therefore, **preventing the defective portions from being transferred,** the original mask is then transferred to a substrate to be exposed. The Higashikawa et al's method therefore does not transfer a defective pattern to a substrate.

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To the contrary, the present invention clearly recites in independent claim 1:

"Claim 1. A method comprising:

 exposing a semiconductor wafer to **a first mask part that is at least partially defective**; and,

 exposing the semiconductor wafer to a second mask part corresponding to the first mask part and that is at least substantially free from defects or with defects at different locations."

The rejection of claims 1-2, 4-7 and 9 under 35 USC §102(b) based on Higashikawa et al is respectfully traversed. A reconsideration for allowance of these claims is respectfully requested of the Examiner.

Based on the foregoing, the Applicants respectfully submit that all of the pending claims, i.e. claims 1-2, 4-7, 9 and 24-38, are now in condition for allowance. Such favorable action by the Examiner at an early date is respectfully solicited.

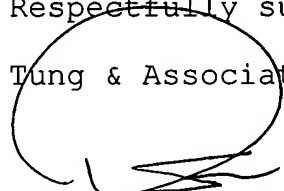
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In the event a fee is due as a result of the response, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 50-0484 any fee due.

In the event that the present invention is not in a condition for allowance for any other reasons, the Examiner is respectfully invited to call the Applicants' representative at his Bloomfield Hills, Michigan office at (248) 540-4040 such that necessary action may be taken to place the application in a condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

Tung & Associates

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Randy W. Tung', is written over a circular stamp. The signature is fluid and cursive.

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